

January 2016

Gallery Sketchbook

Emma Martin

Follow this and additional works at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya>

Recommended Citation

Martin, Emma (2016) "Gallery Sketchbook," *Himalaya, the Journal of the Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies*: Vol. 35: No. 2, Article 6.

Available at: <http://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/himalaya/vol35/iss2/6>



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/).
This Artwork is brought to you for free and open access by the
DigitalCommons@Macalester College at DigitalCommons@Macalester
College. It has been accepted for inclusion in Himalaya, the Journal of the
Association for Nepal and Himalayan Studies by an authorized

Gallery | Connected Himalayan Threads

The experiences of women are difficult to trace in the imperial archive. In the museum, women are most visible when donating the collections of their fathers, brothers, and husbands in order to memorialize their colonial contributions, but their own presence often goes unrecorded and is lost in the process. Occasionally objects—in this case textiles—reveal unexpected connections and exchanges. Two seemingly unconnected women collectors and makers, whose collections are now housed in National Museums Liverpool (NML), reveal an artistic exchange that emerged from a mutual interest in textiles during their time in Nepal in the early 20th century.

Jessie Brown (1888-1983) was a British woman who became a pioneer in orthopedic nursing in the early 20th century. In 1923 she was offered the position of nurse to Princess Nani. Princess Nani was the five-year-old granddaughter of the prime minister of Nepal and she had poliomyelitis. Brown spent eleven years visiting Kathmandu and Princess Nani. During that time she developed an interest in hand-block printing on cottons and silks.

The Hon. Mrs. **Irma Bailey** (1896-1988) also lived in Kathmandu. She accompanied her husband Lt. Col. Frederick Marshman 'Eric' Bailey (1882-1967) when he was appointed as 'Envoy Extraordinary' in 1935. In 1921, the year Irma Bailey married Eric,



Block-print sample featuring tiger, 1934-1939, Yateley, Hampshire, England

Brown's block-print designs drew on strong Himalayan motifs and colour ways, including this tiger design that is reminiscent of the mythical figures, *senge*, that guard the entrance of Buddhist monasteries.

she joined him in Gangtok, where he was serving as Political Officer for Sikkim, Bhutan, and Tibet. While there, she travelled with him across Sikkim and on tours of Bhutan and southern Tibet. Her own interests in Himalayan design are made obvious in the paper archive she created during these tours. Her record includes tracings, drawings and colour swatches for a wide range of design elements, including a large number for furniture, thangka paintings, carpets and clothing.

Although it is still not clear when or how the two women met, their interests in Himalayan design brought them together. On Brown's return to the United Kingdom, she set up a small textile printing workshop for disabled women. The women there made wooden printing blocks based on Brown's research in Nepal and on her mother's Nepali textiles, which she had seemingly commissioned and used while living there in the 1880s. From

letters now in the NML archives, it is also clear that Irma Bailey shared her design archive with Brown. Several of Brown's designs now in the NML collection clearly refer to Irma Bailey's drawings.

This cottage industry became the 'Yateley Textile Printers' and although it closed temporarily for the Second World War it reopened in 1948 and continues in an altered form today. Brown donated a group of textile samples, some of which are featured here, to the museum in 1965. This was the same year that Irma Bailey donated her paper archive; and, again from the records, it is clear that Irma Bailey had encouraged Brown to make the donation.

The author of this piece, Emma Martin, has an essay on the diplomatic history of the *khatak* featured later in this volume.



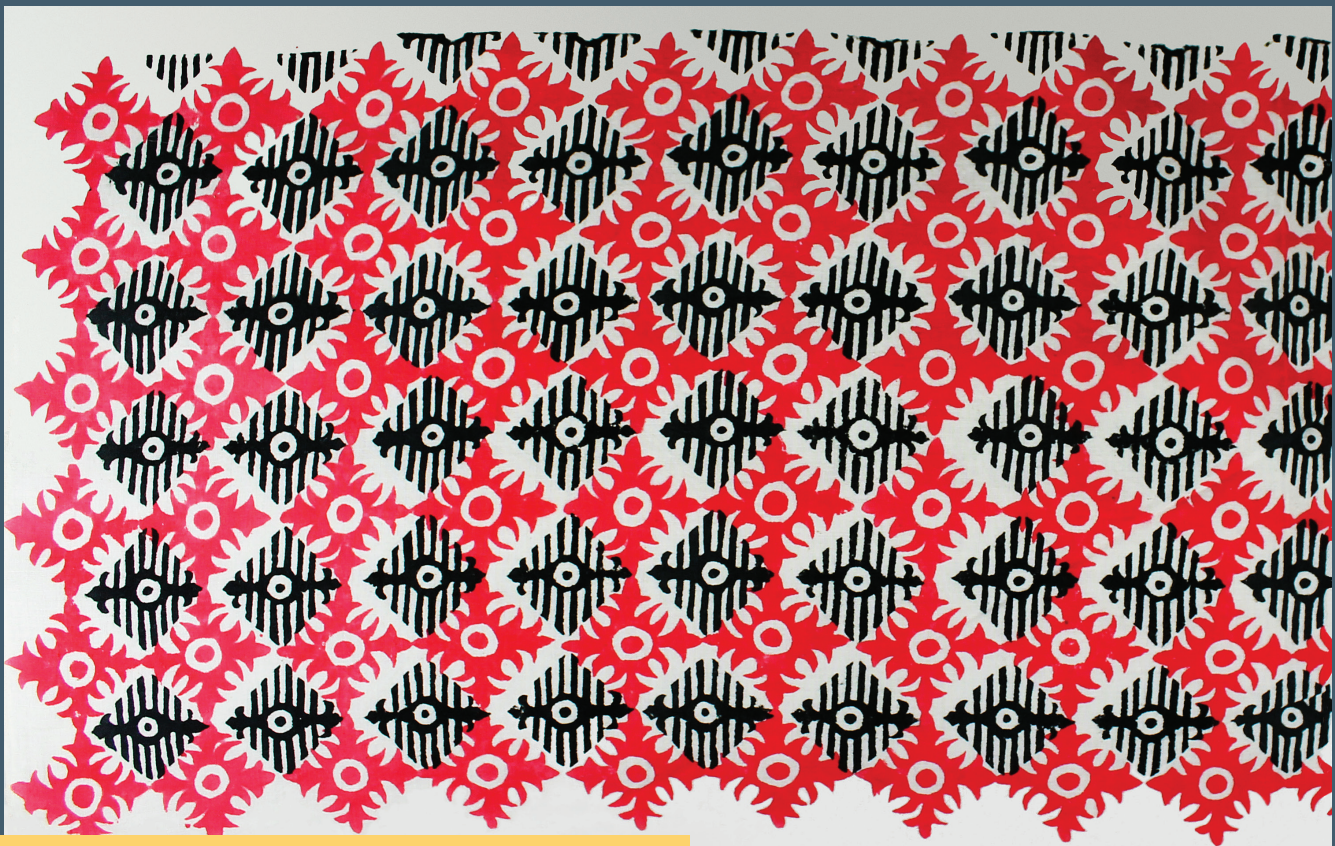
Block-print sample featuring March Hare, 1934-1939, Yateley, Hampshire, England

This hybrid design featuring all the design elements of the Nepali tiger seen on the previous page depicts a quintessential animal of the English countryside, the March Hare.



***Rumal* featuring Krishna and the *gopi*, 19th century, Chamba, Himachal Pradesh**

This *rumal*, used as a cover for gifts or during marriage ceremonies, is a textile distinct to Chamba. It was collected by Irma Bailey and so was recorded by a curator some years ago as coming from Nepal. Its arrival in Bailey's collection now instead hints at unrecorded journeys once made, both by the textile and by Irma Bailey.



Block-print sample featuring jamdani design, 1934-1939, Yateley, Hampshire, England

The geometric flower designs of Bengal's fabled 'woven air' or *jamdani* textiles has been skilfully interpreted by the Nepali weaver and block-printer to create the *dhaka* textile. These cross-cultural exchanges of textiles also made it to England. There Brown produced this design, heavily influenced by *jamdani* and *dhaka* textile motifs.



Front Cover

Block print sample featuring mother bird with moth, circa 1880, Nepal

Brown also had a small archive of 19th century textiles that her mother had given her. While we do not know her mother's name, it is clear from the labels sewn into the samples that she too lived in Kathmandu and had commissioned block-printing for her home.

Inside Back Cover

Drawing of a Bhutanese applique design, 1921-28, Bhutan / Sikkim

This fine drawing made by Irma Bailey 40 years after Jesse Brown's mother collected her very similar printed sample (Front Cover) shows the cross-Himalayan exchange of design motifs.

Inside Front Cover

Block-print sample featuring buti design, 1934-39, Yateley, Hampshire, England

Many of the block-print designs are reminiscent of the *dhaka* fabric that is used to make the Nepali cap. Samples like these highlight the transformation of Bengali / Bangladeshi *jamdani* woven textiles into block print.

Back Cover

Block-print sample featuring seed and foliage design, around 1880, Nepal

Brown's mother collected this sample. It highlights the influence of the natural world and the print maker's skill in transforming natural forms into abstract textile designs.